

# Scope of Study

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## Teacher Certification Program Implementation (Phase II)

Public school teachers in Connecticut must hold a valid teaching certificate issued by the State Department of Education (SDE) in order to teach. At the beginning of the 2006-07 school year, the number of certified teachers in the state was approximately 43,000. Of those teachers, almost 5,000 participated in the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program required for teachers newly certified in Connecticut. The remaining teachers held one of the state's two higher level certifications required for experienced teachers. The State Department of Education is the state agency responsible for overseeing the teacher certification process and ensuring teachers fully meet the state's certification requirements.

A major change to the teacher certification system occurred with the passage of Connecticut's Education Enhancement Act in 1986. The law replaced the previous two-tiered teacher certification structure with a three-tiered system, initiated professional development requirements for teachers at the highest certification level, established an alternate route to certification program, and required beginning teachers to complete an assessment program (i.e., BEST) in order to maintain their state certification. As a result, SDE developed processes within the teacher certification system to administer the new requirements.

The State Department of Education is currently revising its teacher certification regulations. A primary component of these certification regulations is the specific academic and experience requirements that teachers complete to earn an endorsement in their particular teaching specialty.<sup>1</sup> The department anticipates completing its part of the regulation revision process by early 2009. At the same time, SDE is modernizing its teacher certification computer system, and expects deployment of the new system near the end of 2008.

In April 2007, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee voted to conduct a study of teacher certification in two phases. Phase I, conducted during 2007, was a review of SDE's Beginning Educator Support and Training program. Phase II, to which this study scope pertains, will examine the state's administration of the certification process for experienced teachers.

### AREA OF FOCUS

This study will focus on the operations within the State Department of Education to implement Connecticut's certification requirements for experienced teachers. The study will

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<sup>1</sup> All teachers, whether they have an initial certificate, a provisional certificate, or a professional certificate, must have a particular area of practice connected to their certificate level, called an endorsement. For example, a teacher who has an initial certificate with a secondary history endorsement is considered to have the knowledge and skills to teach high school history. This teacher would not be permitted to teach third grade, which requires a different endorsement.

assess whether the department's administration of the certification system is efficient and responsive to teachers and other entities served.

#### **AREAS OF ANALYSIS**

1. Describe the current certification requirements for experienced teachers and how the requirements have changed over time, including SDE's present effort to revise the requirements.
2. Determine the roles of the various entities involved in the teacher certification process (e.g., State Department of Education, Department of Higher Education, and local school districts) and identify the level of coordination among those entities.
3. Examine the organization and resources within the State Department of Education to fulfill its role in the teacher certification process.
4. Assess SDE's efforts to implement teacher certification requirements, ensure consistent application of the requirements, respond to the needs of teachers and others involved, and improve the certification process.
5. Identify the conditions under which Connecticut accepts the credentials of teachers from other states, specifically surrounding states. To the extent possible, determine if those policies affect the state's teaching profession. Also determine if any studies have linked reciprocity policies to teacher supply or quality.
6. Describe the purpose and history of Connecticut's Continuing Education Unit (CEU) requirements for teachers, including the department's current effort to modify the requirements.
7. Examine the state's process for approving CEU providers and programs and the type(s) and quality of information provided to teachers by the state about CEU providers and programs.
8. Evaluate the process used by SDE to audit teachers for compliance with CEU requirements, including: how teachers are selected for audits; the number of teachers selected for audits in relation to the total number of teachers required to complete CEUs; and the results of audits, the numbers and types of noncompliance problems found, and how those problems are handled.

#### **AREA NOT INCLUDED IN SCOPE**

This study will not include a review of the certification process for beginning teachers under the BEST program, which was studied by the committee under Phase I of the teacher certification project. The study also will not evaluate the content of any proposed certification regulations.